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AUTHOR Zhao, Xinshu; Chaffee, Steven H.
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ABSTRACT

A study reexamined survey data collected in late October 1984 in order to test the validity of the generalization that people are influenced more by television ads than they are by television news. Sampling was based on random digit dialing in Dane County, Wisconsin, and 416 interviews conducted by telephone. Data analysis indicated that the contribution of television news to issue awareness is relatively insignificant, and that television advertising has even less effect on viewers than does the news. (The survey instrument plus references and data tables are appended.) (DF)

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POLITICAL ADS VS. NEWS AS SOURCES OF ISSUE INFORMATION

Xinshu Zhao and Steven H. Chaffee

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Paper presented to Communication Theory and Methodology Division,

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

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POLITICAL ADS VS. NEWS AS SOURCES OF ISSUE INFORMATION

One of the most commonly repeated generalizations in the research literature on political mass communication is the conclusion of Patterson and McClure (1976) that American voters learn issue information from television advertisements but not from television news.

"Network news," they wrote (p. 54) "may be fascinating. It may be highly entertaining. But it is simply not informative." They were equally definite about TV commercials, both as to their ineffectiveness for projecting candidate images and their power to communicate about issues.

"Spot ads do not mold presidential images because voters are not easily misled," they concluded (p. 115). "But where image appeals fail, issue appeals work." (p. 116) The "information gain" related to candidates' issue positions "represents no small achievement" in their view (p. 117).

Patterson and McClure's evidence consisted of less than one might wish for such categorical generalizations. They performed content analyses that showed little issue-related information in network evening newscasts, but a fair amount in the Nixon and McGovern campaign ads of 1972. They then assessed the correlation between exposure to these kinds of communication and an index of change in subjective certainty about where Nixon and

McGovern (mostly Nixon) stood on various issues. A typical item was the following:

"George McGovern favors spending less money on the military." Response scale: extremely likely, quite likely, slightly likely, not sure, slightly unlikely, quite unlikely, and extremely unlikely. The more certain the respondent became (in either direction from "not sure") from Wave 1 to Wave 2 of their survey, the more "issue awareness" was inferred.

The measure of exposure to television news was dichotomized, so that "regular viewers" were those who had watched network evening news at least four nights per week; 34 percent of their sample in Onondaga County, New York (Syracuse and environs) met this criterion. Exposure to spot ads was tapped by asking how many hours the person watched prime-time (7-11 p.m.) TV, "the period during which most political spots were aired." Viewers were placed in the high exposure category unless they had watched less than one hour per day, so that 69 percent were high exposure viewers.

The empirical tests underlying the authors' sweeping conclusions consisted simply of comparing the two groups, high and low exposure, to see if the high exposure group increased more in subjective certainty of issue awareness. For news, the high exposure group failed to meet this test; for ads, the high exposure group did become more certain of their issue perceptions.

We have dealt at length with this single study because it is almost the only evidence available on the relative issue-

informing powers of television advertisements vs. news programs. Nonetheless, synthesizers of the field have readily absorbed the Patterson-McClure conclusions into textbooks and review chapters.

Kraus and Davis (1981) call it a "controversial but widely accepted analysis" that "people learned more from television advertising than from television news" (p. 278). Nimmo (1978: p. 385) cites the 1972 finding as the basis for saying that "there are studies [sic] reporting that television's political advertising, not news, is the key source of information."

Diamond (1980: pp. 61-62) notes that "these findings were meant to be as much a criticism of television news as praise of television commercials." Graber (1984: pp. 178-79), on the other hand, sees reasons for the apparent superiority of commercials in their "Simplicity of content, expert eye-ear appeal, and repetition of the message." O'Keefe and Atwood (1981: p. 339) write with a note of surprise that "even campaign commercials surpassed television network newscasts in providing voters with knowledge of the candidates' issue stands" (emphasis ours).

Kaid (1981) is particularly generous toward advertising. She credits it for "increased political knowledge and issue information" in two studies of the 1972 election, not only Patterson and McClure's, but also a national survey reported by Hofstetter, Zukin and Buss (1978). The latter, however, concluded contrary to Patterson and McClure that "Network news produced almost twice the effect on information than political advertising." [sic, p. 569] The Hofstetter study remains comparatively obscure within the synthesizing literature.

Despite its thoroughgoing acceptance, Patterson and

McClure's generalization rests on fragile grounds. It has not been replicated by other investigators nor in more recent elections. It is based on raw correlations that represent individual differences, not controlled tests of a causal model. And the measures of the supposedly competing independent variables -- ads vs. news -- were not comparable.

It could well be that the Patterson-McClure findings were spurious, the result of intellectual deficits that lead to both heavy reliance on TV for news and lack of certainty about issue differences between Nixon and McGovern. The different cutoff points for the two measures (69 percent high on ad exposure, 34 percent high on news) could account for differential correlations, as could ceiling effects within the high news sample, or a false sense of certainty within the high ad exposure group -- i.e., the heavy TV viewing audience in general.

More appropriate measures might also make a difference. Patterson (1980: p. 82) noted that "people often are not closely attentive to the news they see", and several recent studies have shown that measures of attention to TV news correlate positively with political knowledge, whereas measures of frequency of news exposure correlate negatively (McLeod and MacDonald, 1985; Chaffee and Schleuder, 1986; Lasorsa, 1986). In his study of the 1976 election campaign, Patterson (1980) replicated the finding from 1972 regarding news exposure, but did not add an attention measure nor replicate the 1972 finding that he and McClure had related to advertisements.

The Patterson-McClure work has been publicized heavily. As

a result, the television news industry may well have instituted some reforms, striving to cover issue content more than was the case in the era of Spiro Agnew's strident attacks on the news media, and the bitterly ideological elections of the Vietnam War years. This kind of change would also render the inferences from 1972 obsolete. That is, they may have been valid at that time but not for all time as the broad generalizations drawn from them would seem to imply.

The research literature is quite mixed as to the general relationship between exposure or attention to television public affairs content and measures of public affairs knowledge. Correlations tend to be positive for samples of young people (Atkin, 1981), but negative in the typical study of adults in cross-section. Panel surveys, and those using measures of attention rather than mere exposure, produce more positive results (Chaffee and Schleuder, 1986). Dependent measures of perceived issue differences have been employed (with mostly positive results) in relation to televised debates (Sears and Chaffee, 1979) and to general indices of media behavior. But no study has, to our knowledge, tested the explicit comparison offered by Patterson and McClure regarding the efficacy of TV news vs. ads for this kind of voter information.

In this paper we report a test of the Patterson-McClure propositions in the context of the 1984 Reagan-Mondale campaign. We will employ closely comparable measures of the independent variables, measures that refer to attention (rather than frequency of exposure) to both ads and news specifically related to the candidates. We will also introduce a number of control

variables to reduce the danger of accepting spurious correlations as causal evidence.

In particular, we will use not only the usual demographic predictors of knowledge as controls, but we will also control for more general political knowledge itself so that the variance we are accounting for specifically represents knowledge on current campaign issues.

Methods

This study is a secondary analysis of survey data collected in late October, 1984, about one week before the election, in Dane County, Wisconsin.[1] Sampling was based on random digit dialing, and the interview was conducted by telephone. The total sample consisted of 737 respondents. In our correlation-regression analyses reported below, we deleted listwise any cases for which any measure was missing, so that the effective N in these tables is 416.

There is some danger of non-representativeness in this survey. Dane County, which houses the state capital as well as the university, is a predominantly well educated, politically active, liberal center. We see no obvious reason, though, to suspect that the unusual character of this community would affect the relationships among the variables of interest to us in this study. Indeed, the general relevance to respondents of a survey on political issues and behaviors can be more readily assumed here than in places where a strong sense of political efficacy would be the exception and not the rule.

Issue Awareness. The concept of issue awareness has earned

a central position in political behavior research in recent decades, as party identification has declined in the American electorate. Policy voting appears, correlatively, to be on the rise (Nie, Verba and Petrocik, 1976). Learning how the candidates differ on major issues of public concern and campaign debate is an obvious necessary step if people are to live up to Key's (1961) principle that "Voters are not fools." Part of the general theory underlying freedom of the press has been that it helps to provide the electorate with competing viewpoints on divisive issues, so that elections reflect the public will rather than the appeal of particular personalities.

Our dependent variable was constructed from 12 questions that asked the respondent's perception of the positions of each candidate on six issues: "I am going to read you a list of proposals; tell me where you think Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale stand on these issues (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The issues included the equal rights amendment, the federal deficit, raising taxes, nuclear arms, abortion, and prayer in public schools. The complete text of each item, and the percentages who ascribed various positions to Reagan and Mondale, are shown in Table 1.

While no "true" position of either candidate on any issue could be determined with certainty, it is clear that the majority of respondents saw Mondale as somewhere to the left of Reagan on each issue. (A seventh issue, regarding increasing jobs, was dropped from our analysis because Reagan and Mondale were not seen to differ appreciably on it.) We scored these relative perceptions as correct (1 point each), regardless of the absolute

position assigned to either candidate. If Reagan and Mondale were seen as holding the same position, a score of zero was assigned; a negative score (minus-1) was assigned if the person saw Reagan to the left of Mondale on the issue. Our rationale for this scoring procedure is that, while determining the absolute position of either candidate on any issue is problematic, Mondale and Reagan presented the electorate with such clear policy contrasts that their relative positions can be assessed as operative voter information with a high degree of validity.

Table 2 shows the distribution of these scores across the six issues, and Table 3 shows the intercorrelations among the items. All these correlations are significant and reasonably strong considering the restricted variances of the items. The index of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) based on these intercorrelations yields a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

Scores from the six items were summed to create an index of issue awareness for each respondent. The distribution is shown in Table 4. It is somewhat skewed to the high side, because many of the respondents knew most or all of the issue differences between the candidates. Still, there is considerable variance for our analysis, with more than one-fifth of the respondents scoring at or below chance (i.e. a net score of zero). We have given special attention to the univariate properties of the measure of issue awareness because all of our hypothesis-testing analyses will focus on this dependent variable.

Attention to TV News and Ads. The main independent variables of interest in this study were based on responses to the following questions:

"Which type of television advertisment would you be most likely to pay closer attention to, an ad for Reagan-Bush, or an ad for Mondale-Ferraro?"

"Which type of television news story would you be most likely to pay closer attention to, a news story about the Reagan-Bush campaign, or a news story about the Mondale-Ferraro campaign?"

For each of these items, three dummy variables were created based on the response given and the person's candidate preference: Own-candidate, Opponent, or Both Equally. While these answers are qualitatively different, each of them quantitatively represents a higher degree of attention than the fourth alternative, which would be to say "Neither" or in effect no attention.

The validity of these items is, as with any single measure, at least somewhat questionable. (They were designed for research purposes other than those of our secondary analysis.) The questions do not ask about actual behaviors, but are put in hypothetical terms. Still, it is highly likely that most people would be exposed during the campaign period to many news stories and commercials regarding both sets of candidates. Given the casual way in which people attend to television most of the time, a question about the attention one "would" pay should capture real variance in communication behavior.

Important too is the fact that the items are as nearly identical in wording as possible, so that they provide a clear comparison between the two aspects of TV that Patterson and McClure attempted to contrast, news stories and commercial advertisements. The items refer to both news and ads about the specific candidates -- not to news in general vs. ads for candidates, as was the case in the Patterson-McClure study. We see no reason to expect other news (e.g., international events, crime and accidents, weather and sports) to contribute to knowledge of candidates' issue differences; the inclusion of such "noise" in their news exposure measure may well have reduced Patterson and McClure's chances of finding a significant correlation.

The central empirical test in our analysis will be the comparison between these two attention measures, in their correlation with the issue awareness dependent measure. To remove as much potential spuriousness as possible from this comparison, we developed several other variables for control and comparison.

Other Media Use. While we have said that we do not expect exposure to news in general to contribute much to issue knowledge, a number of studies show that people who follow national politics in the media know more about all aspects of national politics, including issue positions. To an extent, we should account for this correlation -- which could represent an effect of knowledge on attention as easily as the reverse -- separately from the test of our main hypotheses about candidate-specific ads, news, and knowledge effects. Measures were

included based on questions about the person's attention to news about "national politics" when reading the newspaper, and when watching news on television. These items are described in the Appendix.

Other Political Knowledge. So that we could separate candidate-specific knowledge, our central dependent variable, from the larger body of political knowledge one could build up without the presidential campaign, a 10-item index was created. Most of the items referred to the Congress: naming one's U.S. Senators and Representative, and the party of each; the congressman's electoral opponent and party; and the terms of office for which these people are elected. Complete text of these items appears in the Appendix.

Secondly, a measure of self-reported political knowledge was added: "On a scale from 1 to 10, how much would you say you know about politics?" (1=very little, 10=very much). This item may be more akin to the Patterson-McClure measure of certainty of issue knowledge than is our issue awareness index, which is based on comparison of the person's perceptions with the actual policy differences between Reagan and Mondale.

As with the index of congressional knowledge, the general measure of perceived knowledge is to be used as a control variable, so that our test of the effects of candidate-specific television news and ads on candidate-specific issue knowledge will not be seriously contaminated by a loose correlation among all types of political knowledge. This provides a very stringent test of the empirical relationship at issue in our study.

Political behavior. Another possible source of spurious correlation is general political activism. We should expect those who are more motivated, interested, or active in the campaign both to pay more attention to candidate-related TV items, and to be more knowledgeable about issue differences. To guard against this possibility we created several additional control measures.

Campaign activity was assessed by four items: "In this presidential campaign, have you passed out leaflets or materials? Attended a rally or dinner? Contributed money? Tried to convince someone?" These were scored yes-no, and the number of "yes" answers summed.

Campaign interest (undefined) was assessed by asking, "How interested are you in this political campaign?" (1=not at all, 10=very interested).

Two measures on voting orientation were added: "Have you made up your mind about which candidate to vote for in the November elections? Which one?" (Scored 1 if Reagan, 0 otherwise.) "Is your vote for a candidate or against another?" (Scored 1=for, 0=against.) While there is no clear reason to expect the directional measure, voting for Reagan, to relate to issue awareness, the second item might in that voting against a candidate seems likely to involve policy differences more than voting for someone would.

Demographics. Income, age, and education, each of which has been found to relate to political communication and knowledge in prior studies, were also used as controls. Each was measured by standard self-report questions.

Data Analysis

Table 5 shows the intercorrelations among all variables. These were then entered into a series of hierarchical regressions, which are summarized in Table 6.[2] The first equation (Equation 1) introduces all of the control variables: demographics, political behaviors, and knowledge measures other than issue awareness. As shown in Table 6, most of these make significant contributions to the explanation of variance even when all the others are controlled, and together they produce a multiple R-square of .289. The strongest predictors (other than age, a variable whose effect is distorted by negative multicollinearity with education) are the other knowledge measures. It appears, then, that Equation 1 is a rigorous basis against which to assess any further increments to variance in issue awareness. In effect it accounts for most of the individual differences that might create spurious relationships with our suspected causal variables. Each of the remaining equations in Table 6 adds, alternatively, a different communication index as a predictor variable beyond the controls of Equation 1.

Equation 1.1 in Table 6 adds the newspaper reading measure to the set of predictors. This produces a significant 1.6% increment to the variance explained (incremental $F=9.02$, $df=1,405$, $p<.01$). This finding, while not our central concern in this paper, gives us confidence in the procedure we are following. Newspaper reading has proven, across many studies with a wide variety of controls, to be a reliable predictor of

public affairs knowledge. It should, as newspapers carry a good deal of information about candidate differences and other aspects of politics. The fact that it holds up in this analysis suggests that our controls, while stringent, are not so powerful that no media effects can survive them.

Equation 1.2 in Table 6 substitutes the three dummy variables representing attention to TV news about the candidates, in the same position as the newspaper reading measure was in Equation 1.1. The results are clearly opposite to what would be predicted on the basis of Patterson-McClure and subsequent syntheses derived from their study. Each of the three dummy variable codes (attention to one s own candidates' news, to the opponents news, and to both) produces a significant t-value. The increment to R-square is 2.1% (incremental F=3.99, df=3,403, p<.01).

Comparison of Equations 1.1 and 1.2 shows virtually no difference between the effects of newspaper reading about national politics, a behavior whose contribution to political knowledge is almost universally accepted in the research literature, and the effects of attention to television news about the presidential candidates. Both survive our very strict statistical controls and produce almost identical, positive increments to the explanation of issue awareness. This is a most striking finding considering that the literature has all but written off TV news as a source of this kind of information since the publication of the 1972 Onondaga County study.

Candidates' televised commercials have, on the other hand, been accorded a good deal of respect in academic circles (see

above) since Patterson and McClure gave the 1972 variety of spot ads a strong endorsement. Equation 1.3 in Table 6 tests their effect in the 1984 Dane County survey, by entering the three dummy variables for ads in exactly the same position as we put the very similar measures for TV news in Equation 1.2.

The results of Equation 1.3 are essentially null. That is, no signficant increment to variance in issue awareness is added by including the ad-attention dummy variables among the predictor variables from Equation 1. The t-values are non-significant for two of the three dummies in Equation 1.3; the increment to variance (R-square) is less than 1% and not significant ($F=1.51$, $df=3,403$, $p>.20$).

We note that, to be sure, the beta weights for the ad-attention dummy variables in Equation 1.3 are all positive, albeit small. To make explicit the comparison with the news-attention measures from Equation 1.2, we tested the difference between the betas in each analogous pair. (These are not fully independent tests, but they are useful in conjunction with other data.) For the own-candidate items, the news-attention beta (from Equation 1.2) was significantly greater than than for ad-attention (from Equation 1.3) at the .05 level. For the both-candidate dummies, news-attention was a significantly stronger predictor than ad-attention, at the .01 level. Only the difference between the opposing-candidate items failed to reach conventional levels of significance, and it too was in the direction favoring news over ads.

These findings run so clearly counter to those we would have expected from the literature based on Patterson-McClure that one is immediately tempted to try to generalize them. Is "television" as a general entity after all a powerful source of knowledge about policy issues? We tested this in a final analysis (Equation 1.4 in Table 6) where we substituted as the last block of predictors three measures of attention to other relevant sources on TV: attention to political ads (without specific reference to candidates in the question wording), to news about "the presidential campaign", and to news about "national government and politics." (Details of these items appear in the Appendix.)

The results of Equation 1.4 are equally as dismal as those of Equation 1.3. The increment to variance in issue awareness added by these three TV-attention measures is less than 1% and non-significant ($F=1.42$, $df=3,403$, $p>.20$). None of the betas for any of the three TV-attention measures in Equation 1.4 approaches significance. All are essentially zero (although they are at least positive).

We conclude that our findings for candidate-specific TV news (Equation 1.2) not only do not extend to candidate-specific TV ads (Equation 1.3), they also do not extend to just any kind of campaign-relevant TV measure that is not candidate-specific (Equation 1.4). Detection of television effects apparently requires quite specific measures, and a close correspondence between the dependent measure and the TV content asked about.

Discussion

We should hasten to state that we do not consider our findings highly generalizable. The study was conducted in a particular place that is atypical in its high degree of political awareness. A single county in Wisconsin is no more representative of the nation than is the single county in New York where Patterson and McClure set their study. The election campaign in question was only one of a long series, and is no more "typical" than, say, that of 1972, which produced the contrary conclusions. With nearly half a century of U.S. election studies behind us, we can see clearly that those from one era should not be generalized to others. This is most obviously the case with the early, and overly influential, studies in Erie County, Ohio and Elmira, New York, by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and their colleagues in the 1940s (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954; see also Chaffee and Hochheimer, 1985). The lack of generalizability across years seems to hold for more recent elections as well; it is evident in the very different result Whitney and Goldman (1985) found in the 1980 election when they tried to replicate exactly the Chaffee and Choe (1980) results on time of decision during the 1976 campaign. The latter study had in turn found patterns quite different from the earlier results of Lazarsfeld and Berelson.

In the search for generalizations, though, we would argue on behalf of our approach in terms of comparable measures and stringent controls. It is easy to take a few raw correlations of different kinds of measures, and jump to broad conclusions about

what TV "does" or "can do". Hirsch (1980) has noted that academics -- normally a highly demanding group in terms of research evidence -- seem remarkably accepting of simple correlational data when they lead to criticisms of television. Television news, the particular target of Patterson and McClure, comes off badly in uncontrolled correlational studies based on frequency of exposure, because people who have a lot of time to spend with TV are unlikely to be in the aggregate intellectually impressive in other respects. They tend to know less, to be less active in politics, to make erroneous guesses about the "real world" of crime and sex role stereotypes, and so forth. This does not, of course, mean that television has caused these deficiencies; more likely, TV simply fills a lot of time in otherwise deficient lives.

Television can look a lot better in studies where measures of attention are used instead of those of time spent (Chaffee and Schleuder, 1986), or when controls to eliminate spurious correlations are instituted. This is still unfortunately rare in research, however. Our own analysis has been hampered by not having optimal measures of the independent variables we wish to test; this is usually the case in secondary analysis, but future research should involve more thorough measurement than we have been able to apply here.

Our findings turn out to be highly specific. We find a contribution of TV news to issue awareness, but only when respondents are asked specifically about attention to news related to the candidates. Other measures, on seemingly related

kinds of TV content -- including the candidate ads currently emphasized in the scholarly literature on issue learning -- produced no evidence of effect. On the other hand, a measure of newspaper reading that referred to national political news without specific mention of the candidates, was as good a predictor of candidate-issue knowledge as was our best (and only good) predictor TV measure.

One implication, then, is that a good deal more experimentation with survey measures is needed if we are to find out much about how television functions in the political process. Our study falls very much short of that of Patterson and McClure in one major respect, and that is that we did not undertake any content analysis -- as they did in 1972 -- of either TV news or commercials in the 1984 campaign. Whether their descriptions of those kinds of content in 1972 would hold up today is a question we leave to another study. Meanwhile, we have built at least a presumptive case that their generalizations about the effects of watching candidate ads and news on TV were overly broad, misleading, erroneous, and perhaps even directly opposite to the case today.

NOTES

1. Interviewers were students enrolled in a research methods course taught by Professor Jack McLeod of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We thank Professor McLeod for the use of these data for secondary analysis.

2. The data analysis was designed by the first author, in a seminar taught by the second author.

APPENDIX

ITEM WORDING AND SCORING

ATTENTION-ADS-BOTH;
ATTENTION-ADS-OPPONENT;
ATTENTION-ADS-OWN CANDIDATE: Three dummy variables based on two questions:

(Q95) "Which type of television advertisement would you be most likely to pay closer attention to, an ad for Reagan-Bush or an ad for Mondale-Ferraro?"
(Answer categories: Both Equally, Reagan-Bush, Mondale-Ferraro, Neither-Other)
(Q31) "Have you made up your mind about which candidates to vote for in the November election? Which one?"
(Answer categories: Reagan-Bush, Mondale-Ferraro, Other-Undecided)

Attention-Ads-Both: 1, if payed closer attention to both; 0 otherwise;
Attention-Ads-Opponent: 1, if payed closer attention to Mondale-Ferraro and was willing to vote for Mondale-Ferraro, or if payed closer attention to Reagan-Bush and was going to vote for Reagan-Bush; 0 otherwise.
Attention-Ads-Own Candidate: 1, if payed closer attention to Mondale-Ferraro and was willing to vote for Reagan-Bush, or if payed closer attention to Reagan-Bush and was was going to vote for Mondale-Ferraro; 0 otherwise.
The comparison group is the attention-to-neither-other group. The vote-other-neither group was left out of the analysis.

ATTENTION-NEWS-BOTH;
ATTENTION-NEWS-OPPONENT;
ATTENTION-NEWS-OWN CANDIDATE: Three dummy variables based on two questions:

(Q96) "How about television news stories, would you be more likely to pay closer attention to a news story about the Reagan-Bush campaign or a story about the Mondale-Ferraro campaign?"
(Answer categories: Both Equally, Reagan-Bush, Mondale-Ferraro, Neither-Other)
(Q31) "Have you made up your mind about which candidates to vote for in the November election? Which one?"
(Answer categories: Reagan-Bush, Mondale-Ferraro, Other-Undecided)

Attention-News-Both: 1, if payed closer attention to both; 0 otherwise;
Attention-News-Opponent: 1, if payed closer attention to Mondale-Ferraro and was willing to vote for Mondale-Ferraro, or if payed closer attention to Reagan-Bush and was going to vote for Reagan-Bush; 0 otherwise.
Attention-News-Own Candidate: 1, if payed closer attention to Mondale-Ferraro and was willing to vote for Reagan-Bush,

or if payed closer attention to Reagan-Bush and was going to vote for Mondale-Ferraro; 0 otherwise.

ATTENTION-TV ADS;
ATTENTION-TV NATIONAL NEWS;
ATTENTION-TV CAMPAIGN NEWS;
(Q7): "When you are watching television news programs and the following kinds of stories about current events and politics appear, how much attention do you pay to them? Would you say you pay CLOSE ATTENTION, SOME ATTENTION, or LITTLE ATTENTION to stories about:
a. National government and politics (Attention-TV National News)
b. The presidential campaign (Attention-TV Campaign News)
d. Political Ads (Attention TV Ads)

NEWSPAPER-READING (Q3): "How often do you read in your newspaper the following kind of stories? Tell me whether you read these stories FREQUENTLY, SOMETIMES, RARELY or NEVER." "b. National government and politics?" (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently)

AGE (Q113): "What is your age?"

EDUCATION (Q117): "What is the highest year of school you have completed?"

INCOME: (Q115) I would like an estimate of your total 1983 household income. Please estimate the combined income for all household members from all sources. Was your total household income in 1983 more than $10,000? (if yes) more than $20,000? (if yes) more than $30,000? (if yes) more than $40,000? (if yes) more than $50,000? (Codings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY: A political activity index created by taking the mean of 5 items (Q47): "In the current Presidential campaign, have you done any of the following things to help a party or candidate?"
a. Passed out leaflets or other campaign materials?
b. Worn a campaign button or displayed a sign or bumper sticker?
c. Tried to convince someone to vote as you plan to vote?
d. Attended a political rally or dinner?
e. Contributed money to a party or candidate?
(1=no; 2=yes)

CAMPAIGN INTEREST (Q20): "How about in this political campaign, if one is NOT AT ALL INTERESTED and ten is VERY INTERESTED, how interested are you in this political campaign?"

VOTE-FOR/AGAINST (Q35): "Would you consider your vote to be a vote for a (RESPONDENT'S ANSWER) or a vote AGAINST (OTHER CANDIDATE)? (1=For, 0=Against)

VOTE-REAGAN/OTHER (Q31):"Have you made up mind about which candidates to vote for in the November Presidential Elections? Which one?" (1=Reagan, 0=Other)

CONGRESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE: A political knowledge index created by taking the mean of 10 items (Q40-44):

40. "Can you name one of Wisconsin's United States Senators?"
40.a "What party does he belong to?"
40.b "Can you name Wisconsin's other U.S. Senator?"
40.c "What party does he belong to?"
41. "Can you tell me the name of your U.S. Congressman?"
41.a "What party does he belong to?"
42. "Can you tell me the name of the candidate that is running against your congressman?"
42.a "What party does s/he belong to?"
43. "How long is the term of office for a U.S. Senator?"
44. "How long is the term of office for a United States Representative?"

(1=correct answer, 0=wrong or no answer)

SELF-REPORTED POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE (Q24): "On a scale of one to ten where one is VERY LITTLE and ten is VERY MUCH, how much would you say that YOU know about politics?"

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Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Issue Awareness Items

"I'm going to read you a list of proposals that have been discussed during the present campaign. For each statement, please tell me where you think Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale stand on these issues"

	STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)	DISAGREE (2)	NEUTRAL (3)	AGREE (4)	STRONGLY AGREE (5)	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL N
ERA: "The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution should be passed."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	10.6%	41.3%	13.7%	22.1%	2.4%	9.9%	(416)
Mondale	0.2	1.7	6.5	59.1	22.6	9.9	(416)
DEFICIT: "The Present federal deficit will not hurt continued economic recovery."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	4.8	27.2	7.2	45.2	8.2	7.5	(416)
Mondale	19.5	43.8	5.3	19.0	4.6	7.9	(416)
TAX: "If necessary, income taxes should be raised before making further cuts in federal entitlement programs."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	12.7	58.9	2.4	15.4	1.4	9.1	(416)
Mondale	1.4	10.1	3.6	62.5	13.5	8.9	(416)
NUCLEAR WAR: "The only way to prevent nuclear war is to continue build nuclear weapons, at least at our present rate."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	1.0	8.4	2.9	62.5	20.0	5.3	(416)
Mondale	16.1	59.9	7.5	9.1	1.0	6.5	(416)
ABORTION: "There should be a Constitutional Amendment giving the states the right to restrict abortions."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	1.4	20.0	7.0	49.3	11.1	11.3	(416)
Mondale	9.4	45.4	11.3	19.2	0.5	14.2	(416)
PRAYER: "Organized prayer should be allowed in the public schools."							
	SD	D	Ne	A	SA	D.K.	N
Reagan	1.4	8.9	8.2	58.9	15.4	7.2	(416)
Mondale	8.9	48.6	14.7	13.2	0.7	13.9	(416)

Table 2

Issue Comparison Score Distribution

Issue	Score	Frequencies	Percent
ERA	-1	67	16.1%
	0	79	19.0
	+1	270	64.9
DEFICIT	-1	106	25.5
	0	98	23.6
	+1	212	51.0
TAX	-1	76	18.3
	0	52	12.5
	+1	288	69.2
NUCLEAR WAR	-1	39	9.4
	0	53	12.7
	+1	324	77.9
ABORTION	-1	119	28.6
	0	77	18.5
	+1	220	52.9
PRAYER	-1	80	19.2
	0	80	19.2
	+1	256	61.5

+1=Reagan is to the right of Mondale;

0=Reagan is at the same position as Mondale;

-1=Reagan is to the left of Mondale, or "don't know" when responding to any one of the two questions

(see Table 1)

Table 3

Issue Item Pearson Correlation Matrix

	ERA	DEFICIT	TAX	NUCLEARWAR	ABORTION
ERA					
DEFICIT	.26**				
TAX	.34**	.26**			
NUCLEARWAR	.42**	.30**	.36**		
ABORTION	.34**	.22**	.25**	.29**	
PRAYER	.43**	.30**	.38**	.33**	.44**

Cronbach Alpha: 0.75

*: p<.05 **: p<.01

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Issue Awareness Mean Scores

Mean	Frequency	Percent
-1.00	16	3.8
-0.83	3	0.7
-0.67	9	2.2
-0.50	5	1.2
-0.33	15	3.6
-0.17	14	3.4
0.00	25	6.0
0.17	25	6.0
0.33	49	11.8
0.50	56	13.5
0.67	75	18.0
0.83	46	11.1
1.00	78	18.8

Mean: 0.434 Standard Deviation: 0.516

Kurtosis: 0.766 Skewness: -1.122

Note: Entries are means across the six issue comparison scores (see Table 2).

Table 5

Correlation Matrix for All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Issue Awareness									
2. Income	.15**								
3. Age	-.17**	.10*							
4. Education	.31**	.24**	-.16**						
5. Congressional Knowledge	.36**	.25**	.16**	.36**					
6. Self-Rep. Pol. Knowledge	.33**	.08*	.04	.23**	.39**				
7. Campaign Activity	.31**	.11**	-.05	.19**	.25**	.34**			
8. Campaign Interest	.25**	.10*	.04	.21**	.22**	.48**	.40**		
9. Vote-For /Against	.12**	-.05	-.05	.09	.12**	.00	.07	-.03	
10. Vote-Reagan/ Other	.01	.14**	.01	-.07	-.09	-.06	-.21**	-.07	-.34**

*: p<.05 **: p<.01

Table 5 (Continued)

Correlation Matrix for All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11.Attention-TV News-Both	.08*	.01	.09*	.09	.12**	.12**	-.07	.07	-.01	.02
12.Attention-TV News-Opponent	.05	.02	-.12**	-.02	-.01	.02	.03	.00	-.02	.10*
13.Attention-TV News-Own Candidate	.02	-.01	-.09*	-.05	-.09*	-.11**	.10**	.00	.07	-.09*
14.Attention-TV Ads-Both	.00	-.01	.05	.09	.05	.08*	-.02	.04	-.10*	.06
15.Attention-TV-Ads-Opponent	.07	-.01	-.14**	.06	.02	-.03	.07	.04	.00	-.09*
16.Attention-TV Ads-Own Candidate	.06	-.04	-.05	-.10*	-.08*	-.06	.10**	.03	.12**	-.07
17.Nwspaper Reading	.31**	.16**	.07	.20**	.25**	.37**	.22**	.30**	.02	-.08
18.Attention-TV Campaign News	.17**	.05	.00	.11*	.10**	.28**	.18**	.42**	-.04	.02
19.Attention-TV National News	.15**	.07	-.03	.15**	.16**	.29**	.16**	.25**	-.02	-.09*
20.Attention-TV Ads	.10**	.03	-.06	.01	.00	.18**	.14**	.22**	-.04	-.05

*: p<.05 **: p<.01

Table 5 (Continued)

Correlation Matrix for All Variables

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
11.Attention-TV News-Both									
12.Attention-TV News-Opponent	-.30**								
13.Attention-TV News-Own Candidate	-.68**	-.20**							
14.Attention-TV Ads-Both	.47**	-.09*	-.31**						
15.Attention-TV-Ads-Opponent	-.12**	.31**	.00	-.23**					
16.Attention-TV-Ads-Own Candidate	-.30**	-.03	.46**	-.57**	-.22**				
17.Nwspaper Reading	.12**	.01	-.10**	.07*	-.01	-.06			
18.Attention-TV Campaign News	.07*	.00	.02	.07	-.01	.02	.21**		
19.Attention-TV National News	.04	.04	-.01	.03	.03	-.01	.27**	.60**	
20.Attention-TV Ads	.08*	.02	-.02	.08*	-.01	.03	.08*	.53**	.29**

*: p<.05 **: p<.01

Table 6

Issue Awareness by Communication Variables, Controlling for Demographic, Political and Other Knowledge Variables

(Hierarchical Regression)

	Eq. 1	Eq.1.1	Eq.1.2	Eq.1.3	Eq.1.4
Income	.06	.05	.06	.07	.06
Age	-.20**	-.20**	-.18**	-.19**	-.20**
Education	.11*	.09	.11*	.11*	.11*
Congressional Knowledge	.23**	.21**	.22**	.23**	.23**
Self-Report-Pol. Knowledge	.14**	.11*	.14**	.15**	.14*
Campaign Activity	.14**	.13**	.14**	.12*	.14**
Campaign Interest	.06	.05	.05	.05	.04
Vote-For/Against	.08	.08	.07	.07	.08
Vote-Reagan/Other	.00	.00	-.01	.00	.00
Newspaper-Reading		.14**			
Attention-News-Both			.24**		
Attention-News-Opponent			.14**		
Attention-News-Own Candidate			.22**		
Attention-Ads--Both				.06	
Attention-Ads--Opponent				.06	
Attention-Ads--Own Candidate				.12*	
Attention-TV Ads					.01
Attention-TV National-News					.03
Attention-TV Campaign-News					.06
Total R Square	.270**	.286**	.291**	.278**	.277**
Incremental R Square by Entering Communication Variables into Eq.1		.016**	.021**	.008	.007

* p<.05 ** p<.01.

Note: Entries are standardized beta weights.